

# What's Happening

## Iowa Commission on Latino Affairs

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[www.iowalatinofairs.org](http://www.iowalatinofairs.org)

Dec. 07—Jan. 08 Report

### IOWA YOUTH CONGRESS

Iowa student representatives elected from 51 high schools including the Meskwaki Settlement School met on December seventh and eighth, 2007, in Des Moines. They held their second annual daylong session in the Iowa House Chamber.

House Speaker Pat Murphy congratulated the Youth Congress members and spoke on how someday one of them could very well be occupying a seat in the Iowa House Chamber. Senate Assistant Minority Leader Pat Ward encouraged the young representatives to respect each others views and opinions as they deliberate their issues. Representative Wayne Ford reminded the Youth Congress members how Iowa has a long history of being in the forefront on civil rights issues, and Representative Ako Abdul-Samad delivered a prayer and then spoke on the growing diversity and responsibility they face as the next leaders.

Once called to order the Youth Congress went to work on their agenda and elected Devin Farrell as their new president and Nick de la Cruz as their new vice president.



They then ordered and debated the issues brought in from their five regional meetings. In the late afternoon, after much discussion and debate, the Youth Congress moved to vote on which three proposals to present to the second session of the 82nd Iowa General Assembly.

The three proposals adopted by the Iowa Youth Congress: (1) Provide comprehensive cultural awareness curriculum. (2) Make Sexual Education a permanent part of an existing class like in physical education or social studies. (3) Increase the legal age to drop out of school from age 16 to age 18.

### DREAM FORWARD SPONSORS

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### DREAM FORWARD DINNER

On the evening after the Youth Congress met two hundred and eighty guest and youth congress representatives attended the first Dream Forward Dinner.

Lt. Governor Patty Judge spoke at the Dream Forward Dinner. She addressed the Youth Congress Representatives sharing with them how after



high school she decided to study nursing because at the time few options were open to women. She told the story about how she would hear that women weren't meant to hold public office so in 1992 she decided to run for a seat in the Iowa Senate. She won. Then her story went on to be the first woman to be elected Iowa Secretary of Agriculture.

She encouraged the youth to dream, to know that their voice and congress represents the future which is good for Iowa, good for America.

Dagoberto Gilb the Hemingway Award Winning writer read from his work. Macarena Hernandez, Dallas Morning News staff report, read a story which is in the acclaimed book, Hecho en Tejas.

[Click here](#) to see bios.



Iowa Youth Congress Members after dinner dance

### VIDEO

More than 10 hours of video were taken of the the Youth Congress session, the Dream Forward Dinner and the planning session.

Three to four video chapters will be produced one of which is a 10-12 minute summary of the Youth Congress session that will be ready in February 2008.

## MEETING WITH GOVERNOR'S STAFF

On 22 January I met with four members of the Governor's staff to discuss HF2026. This particular bill would punish employers for knowingly hiring unauthorized workers.

I suggested that Washington's failure to fix immigration ought to be the focus. That this failure places the state in the awkward situation of having to enact legislation which will undoubtedly place them in the courts. Since the U.S. Constitution specifically gives the federal government the sole responsibility to decide immigration policy.

In Oklahoma, for instance, where a similar law goes into effect next July is seeing in Tulsa County thousands of workers leave, causing rentals vacancies to soar amidst the mortgage debacle. Businesses are closing and the economy there is taking a serious hit. The Tulsa story is happening in Arizona, in Tennessee, in Washington State, and is sure to spread.

An amendment has been introduced to HF2026 which would place the effective date of the proposed law to July 2009 in the hope that the U.S. Congress might by then have a comprehensive immigration plan in the works.

Here is an interview I did with AP which was carried nationally and picked up by the Des Moines Register. [Click here](#)

## MADE IN IOWA

Irene Vega is back from study in France and at work coordinating this video project.

As a way to help bring attention and resources to this project we are working on a pilot video with the [Long Family](#) which we plan to use to promote the documentary to raise funds.

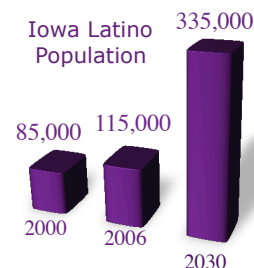
Morgen Halgren has agreed to narrate the pilot video. She is the Iowa Public Television personality that covered the State Fair. She hosted the weekly magazine show, Take O.N.E. for eleven years, and went on to host Living In Iowa for more than a dozen years.

Morgan is also the narrator for the Iowa interpreter Program video.

**THE LATINO BUSINESS BREAKFAST** project will host a reception at the State Capitol on March 11th, 2008, 7AM-9AM, first floor-west wing.

Des Moines Police Sargeant **Joe Gonzalez** has been honored by having a state conference room named after him. During the Latino Business reception, a ceremony is planned in which the Governor will drop by and recognize Sargeant Joe for the room naming.

The Latino community is growing at a rate faster than any other group in Iowa. The Latino population in Iowa is estimated to grow to 335,000 by the year 2030 which will make this the largest generational population increase in Iowa history since 1880.



Source: U.S. Census and Iowa Data Center

In 2002 (according to U.S. Census) in Iowa there were 1,536 Latino businesses with 289 million dollars in sale and receipts, which represented a 14% increase in Latino-owned firms and a 24% increase in sales from 1997 to 2002. In 2002 there were 363 Latino businesses with 2,956 paid employees and an annual payroll of 55 million dollars. Latino purchasing power in Iowa was 1.6 billion dollars in 2004, and is projected to increase to 2.7 billion dollars by 2009.

## IOWA INTERPRETER PROGRAM

Forty-eight students are enrolled, Spring 08 semester, in the program and which are receiving tuition assistance from us. By June 08 we ought to have 80-85 students which have completed the course in general and in specialized interpreting. Our goal is 95 by the end of this years which goal we ought exceed.

The shooting of the Iowa Interpreter Program has been completed and a rough cut done from which a final 10 minutes promotional video that tells the story of the program will be available in Feb. 08.

## PERSONNEL

You might recall that **Melissa Esquivel** began with us as an Ameri-Corp Vista Volunteer back in Summer 2005 and afterwards for more than one year remained on under a special contract. She is now full time with the title of Program Planner I.

Melissa received a certificate of recognition from Governor Culver and Lt. Governor Judge for her work with the Youth Congress.



Melissa Esquivel and Lt. Governor Judge

**Irene Vega** returned from France last month after doing study abroad as a student at Simpson College. She is now with us on a special contract to coordinate "Made in Iowa." Irene is a precise match for this project.

**Rhonda Talton** has joined us, on a part time basis, to work specifically on the Iowa Interpreter Program. Rhonda's work with DMACC fits well for this program.

